

FOREWORD

The international symposium “Contemporary Buddhist Art: traditions and innovations” took place in Ulan-Ude, the capital of the republic of Buryatia, on July 25–26, 2013. It was organized by the Institute for Humanities and Arts of the Ural Federal University (Ekaterinburg) and “Rinpoche Bagsha” datsan (Ulan-Ude).

The Department of Art History and Cultural Studies, which has been educating students in the art history — including the history of Eastern art — for more than 50 years, represented the University.

“Rinpoche Bagsha” datsan was founded in 2000 in Ulan-Ude by Venerable Yeshe Lodoi Rinpoche (Yelo Rinpoche IV), with the blessing of His Holiness Dalai Lama XIV. It hosts several unusual contemporary objects of Buddhist art. For example, the symposium was held in a unique building — a Buddhist stupa of Reconciliation. Formal opening of the stupas of Reconciliation, sacred structures symbolizing reconciliation of differences, development of cultural, philosophical and universal human values, took place on the same day, on August 27th.

Academic events with the focus on the Buddhist figurative art as such are quite rare. The symposium aimed to bring together specialists from different countries in the attempt to address the current state of Buddhist art and the range of problems related to its development in the countries where Buddhism is traditionally practiced, as well as in Europe and the USA.

The new “world without borders” situation, which has emerged at the turn of the 21st century, raises a number of issues in this area: How does globalization affect Buddhist art? Which parts of the Buddhist artistic tradition constitute its core and which parts are subject to change? Do traditional principles of creating works of art remain inviolable? How does new technology influence ideas behind Buddhist works of art and ways of creating them? What methodological approaches we, as art theorists, should take when dealing with these issues?

The symposium featured a lot of stirring discussions and opinion exchanges between art history experts of European and Eastern traditions. Well-known researchers from Russia, India, Great Britain and Bulgaria, as well as experts from the most prominent Russian museums, which have major collections of Buddhist art, participated in this unique meeting. The round table brought together Venerable Yelo Rinpoche, the head lama of the Republic Kalmykia Telo Tulku Rinpoche, Dr. Barry Kerzin, monk and private doctor of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, scholars and artists.

At the close of the symposium, Russian and foreign participants adopted a resolution stating a great heuristic potential of such events. For this reason, the participants decided to make the symposium dedicated to Buddhist art a regular event. "Rinpoche Bagsha" datsan was approved as its permanent venue. The Russian space, where East and West meet, and where the traditions of Buddhist Dharma are being revived and developed, became important for the search of the synthesis between art, science and religion.

The next academic convention will take place in Buryatia in 2016. The Institute for Humanities and Arts of the Ural Federal University and "Rinpoche Bagsha" datsan will again be its organizers.



25.

Дацан «Ринпоче Багша», Бурятия
«Rinpoche Bagsha» Datsan, Buryatia



26.

Симпозиум и его участники
Июль 2013 г. Дацан «Ринпоче Багша», Бурятия

The symposium and its participants
July 2013. «Rinpoche Bagsha» Datsan, Buryatia